



Testimony in Support of the Designated Caregiver Act, SB 352 (S-3)
By Susan Craft, Director of Care Coordination Initiatives
&
Shawn Bennis, Family Caregiver Coordinator
Before Michigan House Health Policy Committee, February 9, 2016

Chairman Callton, Members of the Committee, on behalf of our CEO, Nancy Schlichting, and the over 23,000 employees of Henry Ford Health System, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 352 the Designated Caregiver Act. My name is Susan Craft. I'm the Director of Care Coordination Initiatives in the Office of Clinical Quality and Safety at Henry Ford Health System and this Shawn Bennis, our Family Caregiver Coordinator.

As one of the largest health care providers in Michigan and a national leader in clinical care, research and medical education, we at Henry Ford recognize that caregivers - typically family members, life partners or close friends – can have a profound positive impact on patient outcomes.

Senate Bill 352 supports patients and caregivers by requiring hospitals to provide patients with an opportunity to designate a caregiver, if they choose, and make reasonable attempts to consult with the caregiver on the patient's discharge plan and after-care assistance needs.

We believe Senate Bill 352 strikes the right balance by encouraging the collection of basic caregiver information, while allowing hospitals the flexibility to consult with patients and caregivers needs in a manner that works best for all.

This is important because, through our experience, we know that many family caregivers are ill-equipped to manage the often complex care their loved one requires. Not only may they lack the medical and technical expertise, but they often lack the time or financial resources to find appropriate community care services or to navigate legal or health insurance rules. As our own employee caregivers can attest, doing all of this while balancing work and other family commitments, can often negatively impact their physical and mental well-being.

In response, Henry Ford Health System has created a comprehensive, system-wide approach, known as the HFHS Family Caregiver Initiative. The goal of the Initiative is to provide our patients and their caregivers with the highest quality hospital discharge planning, including education on caregiver responsibilities and community resources, to help ensure a smooth transition from the hospital to the patient's home.

In partnership with Henry Ford at Home and other community partners, our aim is to become the industry leader in caring for family caregivers.

The initiative has 3 main goals:

1. Raise awareness within our own system of the importance of caring for our patients' family caregivers.
2. Develop an environment that better supports employees who are family caregivers outside of work.
3. Create resources that family caregivers can easily access to learn about services that are available specifically for family caregivers.

Today, the initiative is in the final stages of developing a one-stop family caregiver's webpage where Henry Ford and outside community resources will be combined in a centralized location on our Henryford.com website. In addition, our Initiative has already been working with our Electronic Medical Record team to redesign our EMR to collect the information outlined in Designated Caregiver Act. And we've developed a system-wide Caregiver Education Council to make recommendations and assist in implementing education for caregivers.

For our own employee caregivers, we have conducted several focus groups to better understand the challenges they, face. As a result, we have added a new "Work Life Services" benefit to help employees balance work and home life. The service offers a website with hundreds of resources as well as 24/7 access to a live person to assist employees with many needs they may have, including emergent child care, elder care services, attorney referrals, etc.

We have also implemented several pilots including one with Henry Ford Home Health Care to identify and document patients' primary caregiver, one with our Josephine Ford Cancer Center to support the caregivers of our cancer patients, and another to provide free caregiver courses at our 5 System hospitals and Henry Ford Medical Centers.

We will soon be offering a new “Legacy Stories” service, which will allow the recording of photos and voice that can be stored and retrieved to serve as a person’s life history spoken in their own words.

In conclusion, we believe this legislation is a tremendous complement to our own efforts. It recognizes the important role caregivers play while allowing hospitals to develop their own unique solutions, such as our HFHS Family Caregiver Initiative, to support the individuals who are so vital to positive, long-term outcomes. We thank Senator O’Brien for her leadership on this important issue as well as her willingness to work with the hospital community to craft a bill that works for all. We also thank you and this committee for your leadership in holding this hearing today and for allowing us to testify.

Thank you for consideration and we’re happy to answer any questions you might have.

